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ILLUSTRATED MEMOIRS OF OUR EARLY ACTORS AND ACTRESSES.

No. XII.

(Continued from p. 11.)

THOMAS BETTERTON.

HAVING in our last number detailed the principal incidents of Betterton's life, we shall now proceed to collect such notices of his professional character as his contemporaries have left us. We do not usually extend these memoirs beyond a single paper, but the present one has unavoidably exceeded the customary limits, through the introduction of various matters relating to the management of the theatres, with which the history of Betterton is so closely connected, that it would be as difficult to narrate the one without reference to the other, as to describe the campaigns of Wellington without alluding to the events which occasioned them.

The most judicious, as well as the most circumstantial dissertation upon Betterton's merits, is to be found in the fourth chapter of Cibber's delightful *Apology*. The writer, it is true, was an enthusiast upon the question of his idol's superiority over all other actors; but then he gives such sufficing reasons for his administration, and shows so clearly that he was excellently qualified to form a correct opinion upon the subject, that his testimony is entitled to the utmost respect. We therefore subjoin the passage in question, merely omitting one or two paragraphs not immediately connected with the matter:

Betterton was an actor, as Shakspeare was an author,—both without competitors:—formed for the mutual assistance and illustration of each other's genius! How Shakspeare wrote, all men who have a taste for nature may read and know; but with what higher rapture would he still be read, could they conceive how Betterton played him! Then might they know, the one was born alone to speak what the other only knew, to write! Pity it is, that the momentary beauties flowing from an harmonious elocution cannot, like those of poetry, be their own record; that the animated graces of the player can live no longer than the instant breath and motion that present them; or at best, can but faintly glimmer through the memory or imperfect attestation of a few surviving spectators. Could *how* Betterton spoke be as easily known as *what* he spoke, then might you see the muse of Shakspeare in her triumph, with all her beauties in her best array, rising into real life, and charming her beholders. But, alas! since all this is so far out of the reach of description, how shall I show you Betterton? Should I therefore tell you, that all the Othellos, Hamlets, Hotspurs, Macbeths, and Brutuses, whom you may have seen since his time, have fallen far short of him;—this still would give you no idea of his particular

excellence. Let us see then what a particular comparison may do; whether that may yet draw him nearer to you.

You have seen a Hamlet perhaps, who, on the first appearance of his father's spirit, has thrown himself into all the straining vociferation requisite to express rage and fury, and the house has thundered with applause; though the misguided actor was all the while (as Shakspeare terms it) tearing a passion into rags. I am the more bold to offer you this particular instance, because the late Mr. Addison, while I sat by him to see this scene acted, made the same observation, asking me with some surprise, if I thought Hamlet should be in so violent a passion with the ghost; which, though it might have astonished, it had not provoked him? for you may observe, that in this beautiful speech the passion never rises beyond an almost breathless astonishment, or an impatience, limited by filial reverence, to inquire into the suspected wrongs that may have raised him from his peaceful tomb; and a desire to know what a spirit, so seemingly distressed, might wish or enjoin a sorrowful son to execute towards his future quiet in the grave? This was the light into which Betterton threw this scene, which he opened with a pause of mute amazement; then rising slowly, to a solemn trembling voice, he made the ghost equally terrible to the spectator as to himself. And in the descriptive part of the natural emotions which the ghastly vision gave him, the boldness of his expostulation was still governed by decency, manly, but not braving; his voice never rising into that seeming outrage, or wild defiance of what he naturally revered. But, alas! to preserve this medium between mouthing and meaning too little, to keep the attention more pleasantly awake by a tempered spirit, than by mere vehemence of voice, is, of all the master-strokes of an actor, the most difficult to reach. In this none yet have equalled Betterton.

The actor, doubtless, is as strongly tied down to the rules of Horace, as the writer—

“*Si vis me flere, dolendum est
Primum ipsi tibi —.*”

He that feels not himself the passion he would raise, will talk to a sleeping audience;—but this never was the fault of Betterton; and it has often amazed me, to see those who soon came after him, throw out in some parts of a character, a just and graceful spirit, which Betterton himself could not but have applauded. And yet, in the equally shining passages of the same character, have heavily dragged the sentiment along, like a dead weight, with a long-toned voice, and absent eye, as if they had fairly forgot what they were about. If you have never made this observation, I am contented you should not know where to apply it.

A farther excellence in Betterton was, that he could vary his spirit to the different characters he acted. Those wild impatient starts, that fierce and flashing fire, which he threw into Hotspur, never came from the unruffled temper of his Brutus, (for I have, more than once, seen a Brutus as warm as Hotspur,) when the Betterton Brutus was provoked, in his dispute with Cassius, his spirit flew only to his eye; his steady look alone supplied that terror which he disdained an intemperance in his voice should rise to. Thus, with a settled dignity of contempt, like an unheeding rock, he repelled upon himself the foam of Cassius. Perhaps the very words of Shakspeare will better let you into my meaning:—

“*Must I give way, and room, to your rash choler?
Shall I be frightened when a madman stares?*”

And a little after,—

“*There is no terror, Cassius, in your looks,” &c.*

Not but in some part of this scene, where he reproaches Cassius, his temper is not under this suppression, but opens into that warmth which becomes a man of virtue; yet this is that hasty spark of anger which Brutus himself endeavours to excuse.

But with whatever strength of nature we see the poet show, at once, the

philosopher and the hero, yet the image of the actor's excellence will be still imperfect to you, unless language could put colours in our words to paint the voice with.

Et, si vis similem pingere, pinge sonum is enjoining an impossibility. The most that a Vandyke can arrive at, is to make his portraits of great persons seem to think; a Shakspeare goes farther yet, and tells you what his pictures thought; a Betterton steps beyond them both, and calls them from the grave, to breathe, and be themselves again, in feature, speech, and motion. When the skilful actor shows you all these powers united, and gratifies at once your eye, your ear, your understanding;—to conceive the pleasure rising from such harmony, you must have been present at it,—it is not to be told you!

Notwithstanding the extraordinary power Betterton showed in blowing Alexander into a blaze of admiration, he had so just a sense of what was true or false applause, that I have heard him say, he never thought any kind of it equal to an attentive silence; that there were many ways of deceiving an audience into a loud one; but to keep them hushed and quiet, was an applause which only truth and merit could arrive at: of which art, there never was an equal master to himself. From these various excellencies, he had so full a possession of the esteem and regard of his auditors, that upon his entrance into every scene, he seemed to seize upon the eyes and ears of the giddy and inadvertent. To have talked, or looked another way, would then have been thought insensibility or ignorance. In all his soliloquies of moment, the strong intelligence of his attitude and aspect, drew you into such an impatient gaze and eager expectation, that you almost imbibed the sentiment with your eye, before the ear could reach it.

As Betterton is the centre to which all my observations upon action tend, you will give me leave, under his character, to enlarge upon that head. In the just delivery of poetical numbers, particularly where the sentiments are pathetic, it is scarce credible, upon how minute an article of sound depends their greatest beauty or inaffection. The voice of a singer is not more strictly tied to time and tune, than that of an actor in theatrical elocution. The least syllable too long, or too slightly dwelt upon, in a period, depreciates it to nothing; which very syllable, if rightly touched, shall, like the heightening stroke of light from a master's pencil, give life and spirit to the whole. I never heard a line in tragedy come from Betterton, wherein my judgment, my ear, and my imagination were not fully satisfied; which, since his time, I cannot equally say of any one actor whatsoever. Not but it is possible to be much his inferior, with great excellencies, which I shall observe in another place. Had it been practicable to have tied down the clattering hands of all the ill judges who were commonly the majority of an audience, to what amazing perfection might the English theatre have arrived, with so just an actor as Betterton at the head of it! If what was truth only could have been applauded, how many noisy actors had shook their plumes with shame, who, from the injudicious approbation of the multitude, have bawled and strutted, in the place of merit?

After I have shown you so many necessary qualifications, not one of which can be spared in true theatrical elocution, and have at the same time proved, that, with the assistance of them all united, the whole may still come forth defective; what talents shall we say will infallibly form an actor? This, I confess, is one of nature's secrets, too deep for me to dive into; let us content ourselves therefore with affirming, that genius, which nature only gives, only can complete him. This genius then was so strong in Betterton, that it shone out in every speech and motion of him. Yet voice and person are such necessary supports to it, that by the multitude they have been preferred to genius itself, or, at least, often mistaken for it. Betterton had a voice of that kind, which gave more spirit to terror than to the softer passions, of more strength than melody. The rage and jealousy of Othello became him better than the sighs and tenderness of Castalio: for though, in Castalio, he only excelled others, in Othello he excelled himself; which you will easily believe, when you consider, that in spite of his complexion, Othello has more natural beauties than the best actor can find in all the magazine of poetry, to animate his power and delight his judgment with.

The person of this excellent actor was suitable to his voice, more manly than sweet, not exceeding the middle stature, inclining to the corpulent, of a serious and penetrating aspect, his limbs nearer the athletic than the delicate proportion; yet, however formed, there arose from the harmony of the whole a commanding mien of majesty, which the fairer-faced, or (as Shakspere called them) the curled darlings of his time, ever wanted something to be equal masters of.* There was, some years ago, to be had almost in every print-shop, a mezzotinto, from Kneller, extremely like him.

In all I have said of Betterton, I confine myself to the time of his strength and highest power in action, that you may make allowances from what he was able to execute at fifty, to what you might have seen of him at past seventy; for though to the last he was without his equal, he might not then be equal to his former self; yet so far was he from being ever overtaken, that for many years after his decease, I seldom saw any of his parts in Shakspere supplied by others, but it drew from me the lamentation of Ophelia, upon Hamlet's being unlike what she had seen him:—

“——— O, woe is me!
To have seen what I have seen, see what I see!”

That rare and curious pamphlet, the *Supplement to Cibber's Apology*, by Tony Aston, commences with the annexed account of Betterton, in which it will be seen that the writer gives a similar description of his person, and coincides completely with old Colley as to the infinite superiority of his talents:

“Mr. Betterton (although a superlative good actor), laboured under ill figure, being clumsily made, having a great head, a short thick neck, stooped in the shoulders, and had fat short arms, which he rarely lifted higher than his stomach. His left hand frequently lodged in his breast, between his coat and waistcoat, while with his right he prepared his speech. His actions were few, but just. He had little eyes, and a broad face, a little pock-fretten, a corpulent body, and thick legs, with large feet. He was better to meet than to follow; for his aspect was serious, venerable, and majestic; in his latter time a little paralytic. His voice was low and grumbling, yet he could tune it by an artful climax, which enforced universal attention, even from the fops and orange girls. He was incapable of dancing, even in a country dance, as was Mrs. Barry; but their good qualities were more than equal to their deficiencies. While Mrs. Bracegirdle sung very agreeably in the *Loves of Mars and Venus*, and danced in country-dance as well as Mr. Wilks, though not with so much art and foppery, but like a well-bred gentlewoman, Mr. Betterton was the most extensive actor, from Alexander to Sir John Falstaff; but in that last character he wanted the wagery of Escourt, the drollery of Harper, and salaciousness of Jack Evans. But then Escourt was too trifling; Harper had too much of the Bartholomew Fair; and Evans misplaced his humour. Thus you see what flaws are in bright diamonds: and I have often wished that Mr. Betterton would have resigned the part of Hamlet to some young actor (who might have personated, though not have acted, it better); for when he threw himself at Ophelia's feet, he appeared a little too grave for a young student, lately come from the University of Wirtemberg; and his repartees seemed rather as apothegms from a sage philosopher,

* The accompanying Portrait is copied from this print.

than the sporting flashes of a young Hamlet ; but no one else could have pleased the town, he was so rooted in their opinion. His younger contemporary [Betterton, 63; Powell, 40 years old], Powell, attempted several of Betterton's parts, as Alexander, Jaffier, &c. ; but lost his credit ; as in Alexander he maintained not the dignity of a king, but out-heroded Herod ; and in his poisoned mad scene out-raved all probability : while Betterton kept his passion under, and showed it most (as fumes smoke most when stifled). Betterton, from the time he was dressed to the end of the play, kept his mind in the same temperament and adaptness as the present character required. If I was to write of him all day, I should still remember matter in his behalf ; and before I part with him, offer this facetious story of him and a country tenant of his.

" Mr. Betterton had a small farm near Reading, in the county of Berks, and the countryman came, in the time of Bartholomew Fair, to pay his rent. Mr. Betterton took him to the fair, and going to one Crawley's puppet-show, offered 2s. for himself and Roger, his tenant. 'No, no, Sir,' said Crawley, 'we never take money of *one another*.' This affronted Mr. Betterton, who threw down the money, and they entered. Roger was hugely diverted with Punch, and bred a great noise, saying that he would drink with him, for he was a merry fellow. Mr. Betterton told him he was only a puppet, made up of sticks and rags ; however, Roger still cried out that he would go and drink with Punch. When the master took him behind, where the puppets hung up, he swore he thought Punch had been alive. 'However,' said he 'though he be but sticks and rags, i'll give him sixpence to drink my health.' At night, Mr. Betterton went to the theatre, when was played the *Orphan* : Mr. Betterton acting Castalio, and Mrs. Barry, Monimia. ' Well (said master) how dost like this play, Roger ? ' ' Why, I don't know (says Roger), its well enough for sticks and rags.' "

" To end with this phoenix of the stage, I must say of him, as Hamlet does of his father, ' He was a man (take him for all in all) I shall not look upon his like again.' "

The testimony of his successor, Booth, as we find it recorded in Cibber's *Lives of the Poets*, deserves to be quoted. It is honourable to both parties—the praised and the praiser.

" Mr. Booth, who knew Betterton only in his decline, frequently made mention of him, and said, he never saw him, either off or on the stage, without learning something from him. He frequently observed that Betterton was no actor, but he put on his part with his clothes, and was the very man he undertook to be, till the play was over, and nothing more. So exact was he in following nature, that the look of surprise he assumed in the character of Hamlet, so astonished Booth, when he first personated the Ghost, as to disable him for some moments from going on. He was so communicative, that in the most capital parts he would enter into the grounds of his action, and explain the principles of his art. He was an admirable master of the action of the stage, considered as independent of sentiment ; and knew perfectly the connexion and business of the scenes, so as to attract, preserve, and satisfy the attention of an audience : an art extremely necessary to an actor, and very difficult to be attained."

Throughout the *Roscius Anglicanus* of Downes are scattered numerous notices of Betterton's performances; but, although they serve to prove his eminence and versatility as an actor, it would add little to the reader's amusement to transcribe a mere list of names, without any appendage of comment or criticism; which, in fact, the old prompter neither undertook, nor was capable of. He, however, mentions one or two facts, not devoid of interest. Our readers have seen, at p. 354, of our last volume, his assertion that Betterton played Henry the Eighth according to instructions which had been given by Shakspeare, and preserved by the players. His Hamlet, he says, received the same kind of traditional assistance:

"The tragedy of *Hamlet* being performed, Hamlet by Mr. Betterton, Sir W. Davenant (having seen Mr. Taylor, of the Blackfriars Company, act it, who was instructed by the author, Mr. Shakspeare) taught Mr. Betterton in every particle of it; which, by his exact performance of it, gained him esteem and reputation superlative to all other players."

The closing paragraph of Downes's book (published 1708) runs thus:—

"I must not omit praises due to Mr. Betterton, the first, and now only remain, of the company of Sir William Davenant, in Lincoln's-Inn Fields. He, like an old stately-spreading oak, now stands fix't, environ'd round with brave, young, growing, flourishing plants. There needs nothing to speak his fame, more than a list of his parts. Mr. Dryden, a little before his death, in a Prologue, rendering him this praise:

"He, like the setting sun, still shoots a glimmering ray,
Like ancient Rome, majestic in decay."

Betterton's wife was an actress in Davenant's company; and some blundering writers, finding her styled *Mrs.* Saunderson, have taken for granted that she was a widow; not being aware that single and married women were then alike styled *Mistress*, and that *Miss*, the term by which a spinster is now distinguished, signified at that period a strumpet. The *Biographia Dramatica* asserts that the marriage took place in 1620, but blunders, as usual; for it is very certain that it must have occurred at least as early as 1663, she being styled *Mrs. Betterton* in the *Dramatis Personæ* of Tuke's *Adventures of Five Hours*, and Stapylton's *Slighted Maid*; both of which were published in that year. It has been generally supposed and asserted, that she was the first female that ever appeared on the stage in England; but this belief has nothing beyond tradition to support it, while facts seem to be against it; for the probability is, that this actress, whoever she might be, belonged to the King's company, while there is no reason to suppose that *Mrs. Betterton* was ever a member of any but that styled the Duke's, under Davenant, by whom she apparently was educated and brought forward as an actress. It is indeed a singular circumstance, and a striking instance of our imperfect information as to the early history of the stage, that, although the Prologue and Epilogue spoken to celebrate the first appearance of an actress in England are in existence, the research of stage-chroniclers has hitherto been unable to discover precisely *when, where, and by whom* thefeat was performed. Leaving, however, this question, as foreign to our present

purpose, we may observe, that all accounts concur in representing Betterton's wife to have been an admirable woman. From Downes's list, we gather that her professional reputation was great, since she sustained with applause the leading characters, both in comedy and tragedy; and the *Biographia Dramatica*, upon the authority of Southerne, says that she "excelled as an actress every thing but her own conduct in life. In her, her husband was completely happy; and, by their joint endeavours, they were able, not only to acquire a genteel subsistence, but also to save what might support them in an advanced age."

Mrs. Betterton appears to have quitted the stage long before her husband's death—we imagine about the year 1690. Steele's eloquent description of the manner in which she was affected by that event (quoted in our last number), must be fresh in the recollection of our readers; nor do we see any reason to suppose that it exaggerates the grief she must have experienced at the loss of him, with whom, for nearly half a century, she had lived in uninterrupted harmony, although (says Cibber's *Lives of the Poets*) they were of very different tempers, he being naturally gay and cheerful, she of a melancholy reserved disposition, and apparently a prudent and constant, rather than a fond and passionate wife. Cibber, in the fifth chapter of his *Apology*, thus briefly describes her private and professional character:

Mrs. Betterton, though far advanced in years, was so great a mistress of nature, that even Mrs. Barry, who acted the Lady Macbeth after her, could not in that part, with all her superior strength and melody of voice, throw out those quick and careless strokes of terror, from the disorder of a guilty mind, which the other gave us, with a facility in her manner, that rendered them at once tremendous and delightful. Time could not impair her skill, though he had brought her person to decay. She was, to the last, the admiration of all true judges of nature and lovers of Shakspeare, in whose plays she chiefly excelled, and without a rival. When she quitted the stage, several good actresses were the better for her instruction. She was a woman of an unblemished and sober life; and had the honour to teach Queen Anne, when princess, the part of Semandra in *Mithridates*, which she acted at court in King Charles's time. After the death of Mr. Betterton, her husband, that princess, when queen, ordered her a pension for life, but she lived not to receive more than the first half year of it.*

Mrs. Betterton survived her husband about two years. By her will, which was made on the 10th of March, 1712, and proved in the following month, she bequeathed to Mrs. Mary Head, her sister,† and to two other persons, 20*l.* a piece, "to be paid out of the arrears of the pension which her Majesty had been graciously pleased to grant her;" to Mrs. Anne Betterton, Mr. Wilks, Mr. Dent, Mr. Dogget, and Mrs. Bracegirdle, 20*s.* each for rings; and to her residuary legatee, Mrs. Frances Williamson, "her dearly beloved husband's picture."

Allusion was made, in the former portion of this memoir, to a disastrous circumstance, by which Betterton, in the winter of his life, was deprived of the small independence which thirty years of exertion had enabled him to accumulate, and reduced him at once to absolute

* She and her husband also instructed the Princess and others, when they performed Crowne's masque of *Calisto*, at court, in 1675.

† As Mrs. Betterton was herself named *Mary*, this was probably her husband's sister.

indigence. The particulars of the transaction are thus given in the *Biographia Britannica* :—

" Betterton, happy in his fortune, in the notice of his sovereign, in his fame and character, and in a general respect from all ranks of life, might have continued happy, had he not been persuaded to attempt becoming rich, and unluckily engaged in a scheme that swept away all his capital, and left him in real distress. This accident fell out in 1692, and is of too particular a kind to pass unnoticed. Mr. Betterton had a great many friends amongst the wealthy traders in the city, and so amiable was his private life, that all who knew him were concerned and interested in his success. Amongst these, there was a gentleman, whose name we think proper to conceal, who entered into the strictest amity with this actor. This gentleman, in the year 1692, was concerned in an adventure to the East Indies, in which the prospect of success was great, and the gain unusually high, which induced Mr. Betterton, to whom his friend offered any share in the business he pleased to take, to think of so large a sum as 8000*l.*; but it was not for himself, as he had no such sum in his power, which, whoever considers the situation of the stage at that time, will need no argument to convince him of. Yet he had another friend, whom he was willing to oblige, which was the famous Dr. Radcliffe; so Mr. Betterton advanced somewhat more than 2000*l.*, and the Doctor made it up 8000*l.* The vessel sailed to the East Indies, and made as prosperous a voyage as those engaged in her could wish; and the war with France being then very warm, the captain prudently came home north about, and arrived safe in Ireland, but in his passage from thence he was taken by the French. His cargo was upwards of 20,000*l.*, which ruined Mr. Betterton, and broke the fortune and heart of his friend in the city. As for Dr. Radcliffe, he expressed great concern for Mr. Betterton, but none for himself; merrily consoling himself with observing, 'that it was only trotting up 6000 pair of stairs more, and things would be as they were before.'*

" This accident, however fatal to Mr. Betterton's fortune, yet proved not so to his peace, for he bore it without a murmur, and even without mention; and so far from entertaining resentment against his friend in the city, who, doubtless, meant him well, he continued his intimacy till his death, and after his decease, took his only daughter under his protection, and watched over her education, till she thought proper to bestow herself in marriage to Mr. Bowman, the player, whose behaviour was such as to gain the esteem of all who knew him. He has not been many years dead, and reflected credit on the reports of the excellency of the old stage."

Any comment upon Betterton's behaviour throughout this trying affair would be superfluous and impertinent; it was in harmony with the whole tenour of his existence, and shows him in the fairest light, both as a philosopher and a Christian. The person who involved him in the unfortunate speculation, and whose name the writer thinks proper to conceal, was Sir Francis Watson.

Betterton died intestate; in fact, he had probably little or nothing to bequeath. He, however, left behind him a large collection of portraits of actors, in crayons, which were bought at the sale of his

* Tom Brown, on hearing this, remarked, that such philosophy deserved a statue.

goods, by one Bullfinch, a printseller, who sold them to Mr. Sykes. He also possessed a portrait of Shakspeare which had previously been the property of Sir William Davenant, and was engraved by Vandergucht, in 1709, for a frontispiece to Rowe's *Shakspeare*. At Betterton's sale, it was purchased by Mrs. Barry, the actress, who disposed of it for forty guineas, to Mr. Robert Keck, and, finally, it came into the possession of the Duke of Chandos, whence it has acquired the name of the Chandos Head, and is one of the portraits of our great bard which has met with many believers in its authenticity.

From all we can gather, Betterton appears to have had a refined taste for literature and the arts; and among the reasons why his name should be held in everlasting honour, is the fact, that, to his spirited exertions we are indebted for the principal part of our meagre information as to the events of Shakspeare's life, most of which, but for his assiduity, might altogether have sunk into oblivion. Rowe closes his remarks on Shakspeare and his productions with the following paragraph:—

“ I cannot leave Hamlet, without taking notice of the advantage with which we have seen this masterpiece of Shakspeare distinguish itself upon the stage, by Mr. Betterton's fine performance of that part—a man, who, though he had no other good qualities, as he has a great many, must have made his way into the esteem of all men of letters, by this only excellency. No man is better acquainted with Shakspeare's manner of expression; and, indeed, he has studied him so well, and is so much a master of him, that, whatever part of his he performs, he does it as if it had been written on purpose for him, and that the author had exactly conceived it as he plays it. I must own a particular obligation to him for the most considerable part of this Life; his veneration for the memory of Shakspeare having engaged him to make a journey into Warwickshire, on purpose to gather up what remains he could of a name for which he had so great a veneration.”

Of Betterton's family connexions, little or nothing is known. The conjecture that he had a sister, who was mentioned in his wife's will, has already been noticed; and in the list of performers at the Cockpit, in 1659-60, given by Downes, there appears the name of William Betterton, who was probably his brother. Various writers, indeed, with a happy disregard of dates, have surmised that it was his son; but as our hero himself could scarcely have been four-and-twenty years of age at the time, we venture to think they must be mistaken. This William Betterton, says Downes, was one of “ the six who commonly acted women's parts.”

Here we may remark, that the name was, at one time, commonly spelt, and probably pronounced, Batterton. To notice two or three instances, which most readily occur to us:—it is so given throughout the articles of agreement between Davenant and the players forming the Duke's company, in 1660; the Prologue to Tuke's *Adventures of Five Hours*, edit. 1704, is said to have been spoken by Mr. Batterton; so is that to Rowe's *Ambitious Stepmother*, 1701, and he is thus styled in the Dramatis Personæ of that play; and, lastly, in Gildon's *Comparison between the Two Stages*, 1702, it is said, “ Batterton wears away apace; his activity is at an end, and his memory begins to die.”

It scarcely need be mentioned, that movable scenery, or at least anything worthy the name, was unknown to the English theatre previous to the period of the Restoration; and there can be little doubt, that to Sir William Davenant is due the honour of having been the first to introduce it. In fact, in his agreement with the players, just mentioned, dated 1660, it is an especial article that the new house shall be provided with *scenes*, which seems pretty decisive of the question, since no earlier mention of scenery, in the present acceptation of the term, has hitherto been adduced. Yet, upon a random assertion, unbacked by proof, and in the face of all probability, various writers have deprived Davenant of the credit due to the originator of this improvement, and transferred it to Betterton. We give the relation from Cibber's *Lives of the Poets* :—

"In order that the theatres might be decorated to the utmost advantage, and want none of the embellishments used abroad, Mr. Betterton, by command of Charles the Second, went to Paris, to take a view of the French stage, that he might the better judge what would contribute to the improvement of our own. Upon his return, Mr. Betterton introduced moving scenes into our theatre, which before had the stage only hung with tapestry."

It will be observed, that no authority is cited in support of this story, and that no clue is given to the time when it occurred; but, in refutation of its probability, and of Betterton's claim to priority, we may remark, that Davenant made use of scenery in or about 1660, when Betterton was a mere lad, just rising into notice, and certainly not of "mark or likelihood" sufficient to render it probable that the king would specially select him for such an employment. Malone surmises that the period of Betterton's mission (if it took place at all) was during the theatrical interregnum, occasioned by the plague and the fire of London, in 1665-6, (see our second volume, p. 355) which is a plausible conjecture, but nothing more. At the same time we see no improbability in the supposition, that Betterton, after he rose to distinction, actually was employed in some undertaking of the kind, of which the king's acquaintance with foreign theatres, acquired during his exile, might have shown him the expediency; but the object must have been,—not to *introduce* scenery, but to devise improvements upon that which was already introduced.

Betterton, we have seen, managed at one time to accumulate what was in those days a comfortable independence; yet they who are now accustomed to hear salaries of fifty pounds per week, or fifty pounds per night, spoken of as nothing uncommon, will be surprised to learn, that, when at the very summit of his reputation, he never received more than five pounds per week. So great was his modesty, or rather so strong was that feeling of dissatisfaction with what he had performed, and that yearning to accomplish still more, which is commonly met with in men of genius, that not long before his death he observed, "he was yet learning to be an actor." It was this conviction, probably, and not a sentiment of paltry conceit or "frigid philosophy," which made him regard with equanimity those censures from which no talent is exempt, and which consequently even he could not altogether escape. Yet, upon the whole, no actor of repute appears to have passed through life with fewer cavils at his reputation than he

did. "It has been said," observes Davies, in his *Life of Garrick* (vol. ii. chap. 54), "that neither Betterton, Wilks, nor Cibber were hurt by such arrows as were sure to wound Mr. Garrick; but I find, on perusal of some pamphlets relating to the theatre, that Betterton was, of all players, most happily exempt from public censure; he was so greatly fortunate in pleasing all ranks of people, that he was called *infallible Tom*,—a name which I remember to have seen given him in an old ballad, written, I think, in the reign of Charles the Second."

There is a smart saying, which has been fathered upon various actors, but the parentage of which is in reality due to Betterton: Archbishop Sancroft once said to him, "Pray, Mr. Betterton, can you inform me what is the reason that you actors, on the stage, affect your audience by speaking of things *imaginary* as if they were *real*; while we, in the church, speak of things *real*, which our congregations receive only as if they were *imaginary*?"—"Why, really, my Lord," said Betterton, "I don't know; except it is that we actors speak of things *imaginary* as if we thought they were *real*, while you in the pulpit speak of things *real* as if you thought they were *imaginary*."

Pope said of Betterton, as we learn from Spence's *Anecdotes*, "I was acquainted with him from a boy, and really think him the best actor I ever saw; but I ought to tell you, at the same time, that in Betterton's days, the older sort of people talked of Hart being his superior, just as we do of Betterton being superior to those now."

We have now only to consider Betterton's character as an author, though in fact he can scarcely lay claim to the title, having done little more than slightly alter, or as it is called, "adapt to the stage," the productions of other writers. These are eight in number, viz.—

1. *The Roman Virgin*, a tragedy, altered from Webster's "Appius and Virginia." This is founded on a story which has recently been rendered familiar to our stage by the pen of Knowles. Downes says, "Virginius was acted by Mr. Betterton; Appius, the unjust judge, by Mr. Harris; Virginia by Mrs. Betterton; and all the other parts being exactly performed, it lasted successively eight days, and was very frequently acted afterwards."

2. *The Revenge; or, a Match in Newgate*. This is merely Merton's five-act piece of buffoonery, *The Dutch Courtezan*, with a few trivial variations. It was included in the first edition of *Dodsley's Collection*, 1744.

3. *The Prophetess*. This is Fletcher's play of the same name, converted into an operatic spectacle by the introduction of music and processions. "Being set out (says Downes) with costly scenes, machines, and clothes; the vocal and instrumental music done by Mr. Purcell, and the dances by Mr. Preist, it gratified the expectation of court and city, and got the author great reputation."

4. and 5. *King Henry IV.* and *Sequel to King Henry IV.* mere adaptations of the two parts of Shakspeare's play.

6. *The Amorous Widow*, a free translation, or rather a coarse paraphrase, of Moliere's *George Dandin*. Downes says, "Mr. Betterton acted Lovemore; Mr. Smith, Cunningham; Mr. Nokes, Barnaby Brittle, and Mrs. Betterton the Widow, which she performed so well, that none equalled her but Mrs. Bracegirdle." About the year 1707, a contest for superiority in this character, between Mrs.

Bracegirdle and Mrs. Oldfield, which the majority of the town decided in favour of the latter, induced the former to quit the stage.—*The Amorous Widow* is printed at the end of an account of Betterton's Life by Gildeon, 1710; and some portions retained possession of the stage until lately, in the form of a farce called *Barnaby Brittle*.

7. *The Bondmen*, a tragedy, from Massinger's piece of the same name.

8. *The Woman made a Justice*. This comedy was not printed, and we are therefore ignorant of its precise character; but doubtless it was, like the rest, a mere alteration. It was, however, very successful, according to Downes, who observes, that "Mrs. Long acted the Justice so charmingly, and the comedy being perfect and justly acted, so well pleased the audience, that it continued acting fourteen days together: the prologue being spoken each day."

It will be seen that Betterton attempted nothing beyond translating and compiling; but the little he did evinced a sound judgment, and a perfect knowledge of stage-effect. Higher praise than this he does not deserve, and doubtless did not expect; and, indeed, he was so far from arrogating to himself any merit for his performances in the literary way, that, according to Cibber's *Lives of the Poets*, he was so cautious and reserved upon the subject, that it was only by accident the fact was known, at least with certainty. The same writer says, that besides his dramas, he wrote "several occasional poems, translations of Chaucer's *Fables*, and other little exercises."

We here take our leave of Betterton, observing in the words of our predecessor in this task, that as he was a perfect model of dramatic action, so was he an unblemished pattern of private and social qualities. Happy is that player who imitates him in the one, and still more happy that man who copies him in the other.

* *

Caverswall, Staffordshire, Feb. 1831.

COINCIDENCES AND IMITATIONS.

(Continued from p. 12. Vol. II.)

SHAKSPEARE AND VARIOUS GREEK AND LATIN AUTHORS.

THOUGH Johnson has declared that Shakspeare possessed little Latin and less Greek, there are many passages in his works which incline me to think he must have been well acquainted with the classics.

There appears to be some similarity between Homer's monster Polyphemus, and Shakspeare's monster Caliban.

TEMPEST.—SCENE II. ACT II.

Enter Caliban with a burden of wood.

ODYSSEY.—BOOK IX.

Polyphemus enters bearing a great burden of dried wood.

The former is joined by Trinculo and Stephano; the latter by Ulysses and his companions.

Ulysses gives Polyphemus some wine.

— He took and drank, and hugely pleas'd
With that delicious bev'rage, thus inquired,
Give me again, and spare not. —

— O this is from above — a stream
Of nectar and ambrosia, all divine.

COWPER'S Trans. v. 510, &c.

Stephano gives Caliban some wine, who, having drank twice, and being pleased with it, says,

That's a brave god, and bears celestial liquor.

And again :

Cal. The liquor is not earthly.

THE MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR.—ACT V.

Mrs. Ford. Mistress Page is come with me, sweet heart.

Falstaff. Divide me like a bribe-buck—.

Falstaff afterwards says, dividing himself like a buck, "I will keep—my shoulders for the fellow of this walk." On which passage Dr. Johnson observes "Who the fellow is, or why he keeps his shoulders for him, I do not understand." The shoulders we know are part of the keeper's perquisite almost every where. Now "the fellow of this walk" is Herne the hunter, "sometime a keeper in Windsor Forest," as the poet, by Mrs. Page, informs us.

EPIGRAM.—*Incet. Auct. Brunck. Analect. III. p. 153.*

" Within my heart two rival flames prevail,
And double tempests on my bosom hail.
This side to fair Chryseis I incline ;
On that Melania's sparkling eyes catch my mine.
Take me, ye charmers, in just balance shar'd ;
Take each your side—I'm for my lot prepar'd."

MACBETH.—ACT V.

Macbeth. To morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow.

Macedon.—*Analect. III. p. 111.*

To a Lady who gave hopes of to-morrow.

" 'To-morrow.'—This to-morrow ne'er is seen,
Habitual plea of dilatory spleen.
To me, be kind to-day :—nor others give
What I, to-morrow's fool, shall ne'er receive.
'This evening.'—What's a woman's evening? Years!
Evening that comes too late when beauty disappears."

The scene in Hamlet between the Prince and Horatio, at Ophelia's grave, is very like one of Lucian's in the shades between Menippus and Mercury; to which the reader is referred.

Menip. But show me Helen (so famed for her beauty), for I cannot distinguish her.

Mercury. See you this bare skull—this is Helen.

Hamlet, (holding Yorick's skull in his hand). Now get you to my lady's chamber, and tell her, let her paint an inch thick, to this favour she must come!

Coincidences and Imitations.

FROM AGATHIAS.—*Analecta Brunckii III.* p. 63.

“Slowly to Ephyre while I proceed,
I see neglected, by the public way,
The ancient tomb of Lais: for thus say
The characters whose faint remains I read,—
I weep —— Ah, once too beautiful and gay,
Too lovely! though to me 'twas not decreed
To see thee, till for ages thou hadst slept
In darkness and in dust! but had I seen
When emulous youth gaz'd thee as beauty's queen,
At this sad change how should I then have wept.
Delusive joy of earth! Ah fruitless tears —
Ah, sighs! for charms which now oblivion faintly hears!”

SAPPHO.

“That man seems to me to be happy as the gods, who sits facing
thee; and who, near thee, hears thy sweet discourse.”

PIGRAM IN ANTHOL.

“Happy the man who sees thee, thrice happy he who hears thee, a
demi-god who kisses thee, and a perfect god who has thee for his bed-
fellow.”

THE TAMING OF THE SHREW.

Cath. Happy the parents of so fair a child;
Happier the man, whom favourable stars
Allot thee for his lovely bedfellow.

Old age is sans every thing.

AS YOU LIKE IT.

Jaques. —— Last scene of all,
That ends this strange eventful history,
Is second childishness, and meer oblivion;
Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans every thing.

MENANDER IN PLUTARCH.

Thou hast suffered no wrong, unless thou dost fancy so.

EPICTETUS.—*Enchir. c. 31.*

No one hurts thee unless thou art willing he should. For then
only wilt thou be hurt, when thou dost think thyself hurt.

MARCUS ANTONINUS.—*B. 7. § 14.*

Unless I myself think that which happens an evil, I am still unhurt.

OTHELLO.—SCENE XIV. ACT II.

Iago. You have lost no reputation at all, unless you repute yourself such a
loser.

SCENE VIII. ACT III.

Othello. He that is robb'd ——
Let him not know't, and he's not robb'd at all.

EPICTETUS.—*Enchir.* c. 79.

They can kill me, but they cannot hurt me.

HAMLET.

I do not set my life at a pin's fee;
And, for my soul, what can it do to that,
Being a thing immortal?

ANNE TO RICHARD.

Thou hadst but power over his mortal body,
His soul thou canst not have.

MACBETH.*

Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood
Clean from my hand?

THE CHOEPHORÆ OF ÆSCHYLUS.

"All the streams rushing from one mouth to wash away the blood
of this hateful deed would wash in vain."

Compare the characters of Orestes and Pylades with those of Hamlet and Horatio. Aegisthus and Clytemnestra also resemble Claudius the king, and Gertrude the queen. Aegisthus was cousin to Agamemnon; the king was brother to Hamlet's father. Aegisthus and the king, with the connivance of Clytemnestra and the queen, murder the husbands of the latter, and obtain their thrones. They are both killed by the sons of the deceased, to which act they are alike excited by preternatural means; the one by an oracle, the other by his father's ghost. See the above play of Æschylus; there the spirit or manes of Agamemnon are disturbed as well as Hamlet's father's, both desirous of being revenged of their murderers.

THEOCRITUS.—*Id.* XXVII. v. 64.

I came in here a maid, I shall return home a woman.

HAMLET.

Ophelia. "Then up he rose, and don'd his clothes,
And dupt the chamber door,
Let in the maid, that out a maid
Never returned more."

HOMER.—*Il.* VI. v. 429.

Andro. "Yet while my Hector still survives, I see
My father, mother, brethren, all, in thee.
Alas, my parents, brothers, kindred all,
Once more will perish if my Hector fall."

POPE.

ROMEO AND JULIET.

Juliet. Romeo is banished —— to speak that word
Is father, mother, Tybalt, Romeo, Juliet,
All slain, all dead!

The one sets the same value on Hector as the other does on Romeo.

* See Analect. III. p. 199.

HOMER.—*Illiad. XXI. v. 495.*

For fate was not willing she (a dove) should be taken.

HAMLET.

There is a special providence in the fall of a sparrow.

LEAR.

See how yon' justice rails upon yon' simple thief. Hark, in thine ear,
Change places; and handy-dandy, which is the justice, which is the thief?

“The wages of sin is death.”

So, as it has been observed by Æschylus,

The harvest of the field of wrong is death.

Why all the souls that were, were forfeit once.

SHAKSPEARE.

H. H. P.

A COMPANION TO SHAKSPEARE'S PLAYS.

BY W. C. STAFFORD, ESQ.

(Continued from page 247, Vol. II.)

MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING.

This comedy, (which, according to Chalmers and Drake, was written in 1599, and to Malone in 1600,) has two plots—one founded on the loves of Claudio and Hero; the other upon the antipathies of Beatrice and Benedick. Both the love and antipathy merge in that ceremony, the end of which is “amazement.” The first plot Shakspeare found in a novel of Baudello’s, a Milanese, who flourished in the middle of the 16th century. He was an ecclesiastic, and ultimately became bishop of Agen, in France, to which dignity he was raised by Francis I. in 1550, and where he died in 1562. His tales were first published at Lucca, in quarto, in 1554. His twenty-second tale contains the story of Hero; but it originally appeared in a Spanish novel, called *Tirante the White*, written in the Catalonian dialect, about the year 1400. Ariosto relates the same story in his *Orlando Furioso*, from whence it was copied by Baudello; and as Shakspeare, in these particulars has deviated from the novelist, in one of which he follows the poet, it is evident that he was acquainted with both the poem and the tale. The latter came to him through the medium of Bellepriest, who published it in his *Cent Historiques Tragiques*, in 1583, which were shortly afterwards translated into English. There is an Episode in the *Fairy Queen*, Book II. c. 4, which also resembles the fortunes of Claudio and Hero.

In Ariosto, the story occurs in the fifth canto. Ginevia, daughter to the King of Scotland, is beloved at once by an Italian nobleman, and by the Duke of Albany; she gives the preference to the former, and the Duke induces Ginevia’s waiting-maid, in the garb of her mistress, to throw down a ladder from the window of the latter, by which he might ascend to her chamber. The Italian, through the agency of the Duke, was a concealed spectator of the scene; he denounces the supposed faithless Ginevia, and she was condemned to death. The arrival of Rinaldo, who declares himself her champion, was the means of preserving the life of the lady, and of punishing the treachery of the Duke and the waiting-maid.*

* Mr. Farmer thinks that the Ginevia of Turberville was the only source from which Shakspeare drew his materials for a part of this play; “The tale,” says Harrington, “is a pretie comical matter, and hath been written in English verse some few years past, learnedly and with good grace, by M. George Turbervil.”

In the novel, "Leonato, a gentleman of Messina, had a daughter, named Fenicia, who was betrothed to Timbreo de Cardona, a young man of the same city. Girondo, a disappointed lover of the lady, having resolved to prevent the marriage, sends a confidante to Timbreo, to warn him of the disloyalty of his mistress, and offers that night to show him a stranger scaling her chamber window. Timbreo accepts the invitation, and sees the hired servant of Girondo, in the dress of a gentleman, ascend a ladder and enter the house of Leonato. Stung with rage and jealousy, he next morning accuses his innocent mistress to her father, and rejects the alliance. Fenicia, on hearing this intelligence, sinks down in a swoon. This is followed by a dangerous illness, which gives her father an opportunity of preventing reports injurious to her fame, by pretending she is dead. She is accordingly sent to the country, and her funeral rites are celebrated in Messina. Girondo, struck with remorse at having occasioned her death, now confesses his villainy to Timbreo, after which they proceed together to make the requisite apologies to her family. The sole penance which the father imposes on Timbreo is, that he should espouse a lady of his selection, and that he should not demand to see her previous to the performance of the bridal ceremony. At the nuptial festival, Timbreo, instead of the new bride he had awaited, is presented with the innocent and much injured Fenicia."*

I have found no authority for the adventures of Benedick and Beatrice; that portion of the comedy is Shakspeare's own, and is most skilfully interwoven with the story of Claudio and Hero, which he borrowed from preceding writers.

Much Ado about Nothing, is one of Shakspeare's best comedies, and is oftener represented than any other. It contains, as Mr. Stevens well observes, "two of the most sprightly characters that Shakspeare ever drew. The wit, the humourist, the gentleman, and the soldier, are combined in Benedick. It is to be lamented, indeed, that the first and most splendid of these distinctions is disgraced by unnecessary profaneness; for the goodness of his heart is hardly sufficient to atone for the licence of his tongue." Beatrice is a match for Benedick in wit. "And though there is," as the same writer observes, "a sarcastic levity in her conversation, which too frequently flashes out; yet that is sufficiently accounted for by the manners of the age in which the poet lived, when a much greater licence was tolerated in the language of ladies than would now be allowed." But these are not the only characters in which the genius of Shakspeare is displayed. Dogberry and Verges, the princes of all parish constables, are two imitable portraits of ignorance in office;—the self-complacence of the former,—the air of importance with which he gives the watch their charge,—the grave sententiousness of his ridiculous maxims, which he delivers with as much authority as if he were a Solon or a Lycurgus, and the earnestness with which he threatens to bestow all his tediousness, "were he as tedious as a king," on Leonato,—his blundering examination of Conrade and Borachio,—and his burst of indignation, when the former calls him an ass,—constitute this one of the best low comedy characters that ever was written. These ignorant officers, with Benedick and Beatrice, are the only characters in which the inventive genius of the poet shines forth with any peculiar lustre. The remainder of the *Dramatis Personæ* are well drawn, and admirably sustained; they are in strict keeping, and their dialogues are couched in elegant, and frequently highly poetical, language; but they bear about them no distinctive marks by which genius might claim them for its own. Benedick and Beatrice, Dogberry and Verges, on the contrary, are splendid creations of the poet, possessing as much claim to admiration as his Juliet or Macbeth,—his Mercutio or his Falstaff,—and, like them, they remain as yet unequalled. Nor is any writer of the present day, I fear, likely to contest the palm of superiority with our matchless bard. There is one who, in another department, has displayed as much invention, as keen a perception of either the grand and sublime, or the witty and humorous, and as much skill in the delineation of character; but he

* Dunlop's History of Fiction, vol. ii. pp. 457, 458.

has attempted only one drama, and in that he failed,—a failure the more wonderful, as the structure of many of his novels is essentially dramatic. Shakspeare, therefore, still reigns as much the undisputed monarch of the drama, as Sir Walter Scott does over the kindred department in literature of romantic fiction.*

(*To be continued.*)

MEMOIR OF MRS. GLOVER.

THIS lady's patronimic and sponsorial appellation was Julia *Butterton*; her father, however, from the wish of being considered a descendant of the illustrious actor whose life we have had the pleasure of noticing, changed the *u* into *e*, and always styled himself Betterton.

Mrs. Glover may, with great truth, be termed a child of Thespis, for she appeared on the boards of the York Theatre when only in her sixth year, as the Page in *The Orphan*, and evinced so much talent, that the celebrated Cooke announced her to play Tom Thumb for his benefit. At the age of thirteen she performed at Bath, where she soon became a great favourite. After remaining here two years, she was engaged by Mr. Harris for Covent Garden, for five years, and, accordingly, in October, 1797, she made her début as Elwina, in Miss Moore's tragedy of *Percy*, and an introductory prologue was furnished for the occasion by Cumberland, allusive to her extreme youth, which, together with the play, was well received, and repeated. She was soon after invested with most of the principal characters in tragedy and comedy, and Mr. Cumberland was so gratified with her personation of Charlotte Rusport, in *The West Indian*, that he gave her the leading part in his comedy of *False Impressions*. She married Mr. Glover in 1800.

Mrs. Glover, in a certain line of character, is decidedly without a rival. Her Mrs. Candour is the most just and amusing portraiture of that greedy lover of scandal that can be imagined: the heartfelt glee and eagerness with which she relates the misdoings and indiscretions of her friends, is admirably true to nature. She has attained great applause in many of Mrs. Davenport's favourite characters, but in some of them—Mrs. Malaprop and Mrs. Heidelberg, for instance—she is rather apt to indulge in caricature and buffoonery.

MEMOIR OF MR. MACREADY.

WE hasten to correct an error which occurred in the above memoir. We stated that Mr. M. was born in Howland Street; it should have been, at the house of Mr. Carter, a shoemaker, in the *Strand*.

MEMOIR OF CARL MARIA VON WEBER.

WE believe we cannot be accused of borrowing much from contemporary journals, but the Memoir of Weber, in the *Foreign Quarterly Review*, contains matter so interesting to all playgoers, that we cannot help transcribing a portion of it.

* This was written before the appearance of *The House of Aspen*.

Mr. Theodore Hell, "a name *unmusical* to Volscian ears," announces himself as the executor of Weber and guardian of his sons; and in this capacity of executor he has laid before the public the posthumous works of his deceased friend, accompanied with various dissertations of his own, critical and biographical. With his aid, and that of one or two other sources, we shall endeavour to lay before our readers some authentic particulars relative to this great good man.

Weber was born at Eustin, in Holstein, on the 18th of December, 1786. Like almost every other great composer, his father was a musician. He was an accomplished violinist, and at an early period anxiously devoted himself to the education of his son. The retired habits of his family, his early intercourse with persons older than himself, and his seclusion from the society of rude and boisterous playmates, soon excited in his mind a disposition to thought, and taught him to live in a world of his own imagination. "I heated my fancy," says Weber in a letter to a friend, written long afterwards, "with the reading of romances, and pictured to myself models of ideal excellence." These sedentary pursuits and early wanderings of imagination, while they matured his intellectual faculties, not improbably laid the foundation of that physical weakness which too soon terminated in disease. His occupations were incessant. Music at first only shared his attention with painting and drawing. He wrought in crayons, in oil, in water-colours; he etched very tolerably; every thing, in short, indicated that restless activity of mind, which, whether it be spread over the whole field of art, or poured into a single channel, seems to be the inseparable concomitant of genius. Gradually the master-feeling of his soul assumed the preponderance, and banished its rivals from the scene; painting and etching dropped silently into abeyance, and music engrossed the whole energies of his youthful mind.

Even the field of music, it seemed, was not wide enough for him. Seneffeler's discovery of lithographic printing, all at once inspired him with the resolution of turning lithographer. He thought he had discovered an improved process in lithography, and forthwith set about reducing his invention to practice, by removing to Freyberg, and actually commencing the practice of the art. But the mechanical "spirit-killing" drudgery, as he calls it, of this employment soon became repulsive, and throwing away his alkalies and his dabbers, he returned with a warmer and now unalterable attachment to his former studies.

In 1800, he composed the music of the Chevalier Steinberg's opera, *The Maid of the Woods*, which, though he himself characterizes it "as a very immature production, only not entirely destitute of occasional invention," appears to have been received with approbation even in Berlin and Petersburgh, no trifling distinction for the work of a boy of fourteen.

Vienna is, in Germany, the Holy Land to which all musical devotees make their pilgrimage, and Weber also turned his face to the east. His reception was kind and cordial. Musicians, in general, are not conspicuous for the harmony of their intercourse with each other; but Weber was received with generous sympathy by those in whose

minds his rising genius and boundless application might have excited envy.

He travelled through Germany in various directions, and his operas were played with success in Frankfort, Berlin, and Vienna.

Weber's marriage was a happy one. His wife was the celebrated actress, Caroline Brand, with whom he had formed an acquaintance when at Prague.

In the prosecution of laborious duties, in various capitals, Weber passed his time till 1819, when ill health drew him to the country. During this season of tranquillity he commenced the well-known *Freyschütz*, an opera which had long been commissioned for the Berlin theatre, founded on a romance of Apel's. His friend Kind, by whom the text of the opera was to be framed, had at first given it the name of *The Jager's Bride*, which was afterwards changed for the more striking title (to a German ear) of *The Enchanted Bullets*. His labours were for a time interrupted by the sickness of his wife; but in 1821, the newly-erected royal opera at Berlin was opened with *Der Freyschütz*.

The effect produced by the first representation of this romantic opera, which we shall never cease to regard as one of the proudest achievements of genius, was almost unprecedented. It was received with general acclamations, and raised his name at once to the first eminence in operatic composition. In January it was played in Dresden, in February at Vienna, and every where with the same success. Weber alone seemed calm and undisturbed amid the general enthusiasm. But while increasing in celebrity, and rising still higher, if that were possible, in the estimation of the public, his health was rapidly waning, amidst his anxious and multiplied duties. "Would to God," says he, in a letter written shortly afterward, "that I were a tailor, for then I should have a Sunday's holiday!" Meantime a cough, the herald of consumption, tormented him, and the slow minings of the hectic within began to manifest themselves more visibly in days and nights of feverish excitement. It was in the midst of this he accepted the task of composing an opera for Covent Garden theatre. His fame, which had gradually made its way through the north of Germany, (where his *Freyschütz* was played in 1822,) to England, induced the managers to offer him liberal terms for an opera, on the subject of *Oberon*, the well-known fairy tale on which Wieland has reared his fantastic but beautiful and touching comic *Epos*.

He received the first act of Planché's manuscript in December, 1824, and forthwith began his labours, though he seems to have thought that the worthy managers, in the short time they were disposed to allow him, were expecting impossibilities, particularly as the first step towards its composition, on Weber's part, was the study of the English language itself, the right understanding of which, Weber justly considered as preliminary to any attempt to marry Mr. Planché's ephemeral verses to his own immortal music. These exertions increased his weakness so much, that he found it necessary to resort to a watering place in the summer of 1825. In December he returned to Berlin, to bring out his *Euryanthe* there in person. It was received, as might have been anticipated, with great applause, though less

enthusiastically than the *Freyschütz*, the wild and characteristic music of which came home with more intensity to the national mind. After being present at two representations, he returned to his labours on *Oberon*.

The work, finally, having been completed, Weber determined himself to be present at the representation of this his last production. He hoped, by his visit to London, to realize something for his wife and family; for hitherto, on the whole, poverty had been his companion. Want had indeed, by unceasing exertion, been kept aloof, but still hovering near him, and threatening, with the decline of his health, and his consequent inability to discharge his duties, a nearer and a nearer approach. Already he felt the conviction that his death was not far off, and that his wife and children would soon be deprived of that support which his efforts had hitherto afforded them. His intention was to return from London by Paris, where he expected to form a definite arrangement relative to an opera which the Parisians had long requested from him. He set out early in 1826, accompanied by his friend Furstenau, a celebrated performer on the flute, travelling in a comfortable carriage, which his health rendered indispensable. His cough was less troublesome on the journey than it had latterly been. He reached Paris on the 25th of February, where he was received in the most flattering manner by Rossini, who was so anxious to see him, that he had called before his arrival, that he might ascertain the exact moment of his coming. On the 27th he was present at the first representation of Spontini's *Olympia*; and though no great admirer of the composer, the way in which the opera was performed elicited his warmest approbation. "How splendid a spectacle," says he, "is the opera here! The noble building, the masses upon the stage, and in the orchestra, are imposing, almost awful. The orchestra in particular has a strength and a fire such as I never before witnessed." The longer he remained in Paris, the more the number of his visitors increased. "I cannot venture to describe to you," he writes to his wife, "how I am received here. It would be the excess of vanity. The very paper would blush for me, were I write down half of what the greatest living artists here tell me. If I don't die of pride now, I am ensnared against that fate for ever."

On the 2d of March he left Paris for England, which he reached on the 4th, amid a heavy shower of rain—a gloomy opening to his visit. The first incident, however, that happened after his arrival, showed how highly his character and talents were appreciated. Instead of requiring to present himself as an alien at the Passport Office, he was immediately waited upon by the officer with the necessary papers, and requested to think of nothing but his own health, as every thing would be managed for him. On the 6th he writes to his wife from London:—

"God be thanked! here I sit, well and hearty, already quite at home, and perfectly happy in the receipt of your dear letter, which assures me that you and the children are well; what more or what better could I wish for? After sleeping well and paying well at Dover, we set out yesterday morning in the Express coach, a noble carriage drawn by four English horses, such as no prince need be ashamed of. With four persons within, four in front, and four

behind, we dashed on with the rapidity of lightning through this inexpressibly beautiful country ; meadows of the loveliest green, gardens blooming with flowers, and every building displaying a neatness and elegance which form a striking contrast to the dirt of France. The majestic river, covered with ships of all sizes, (amongst others the largest ship of the line, of one hundred and forty-eight guns,) the graceful country-houses, altogether made the journey perfectly unique."

He took up his residence with Sir George Smart, where every thing that could add to his comfort or soothe his illness had been provided by anticipation. He found his table covered with cards from visitors who had called before his arrival, and a splendid piano-forte in his room from one of the first makers, with a request that he would make use of it during his stay.

"The whole day," he writes to his wife, "is mine till five, then dinner, the theatre, or society. My solitude in England is not painful to me. The English way of living suits me exactly, and my little stock of English, in which I make tolerable progress, is of incalculable use to me.

"Give yourself no uneasiness about the opera (*Oberon*), I shall have leisure and repose here, for they respect my time. Besides, the *Oberon* is not fixed for Easter Monday, but some time later ; I shall tell you afterwards when. The people are really too kind to me. No king ever had more done for him out of love ; I may almost say they carry me in their arms. I take great care of myself, and you may be quite at ease on my account. My cough is really a very odd one. For eight days it disappeared entirely ; then, upon the third (of March), a vile spasmodic attack returned before I reached Calais. Since that time it is quiet again. I cannot, with all the consideration I have given it, understand it at all. I sometimes deny myself every indulgence, and yet it comes. I eat and drink every thing, and it does not come. But be it as God wills.

"At seven o'clock in the evening we went to Covent Garden, where *Rob Roy*, an opera after Sir Walter Scott's novel, was played. The house is handsomely decorated, and not too large. When I came forward to the front of the stage-box, that I might have a better view of it, some one called out Weber ! Weber is here ! and although I drew back immediately, there followed a clamour of applause which I thought would never have ended. Then the overture to the *Frey-schütz* was called for, and every time I showed myself the storm broke loose again. Fortunately soon after the overture, *Rob Roy* began, and gradually things became quiet. Could a man wish for more enthusiasm, or more love ? I must confess that I was completely overpowered by it, though I am of a calm nature, and somewhat accustomed to such scenes. I know not what I would have given to have had you by my side, that you might have seen me in my foreign garb of honour. And now, dear love, I can assure you that you may be quite at ease, both as to the singers and the orchestra. Miss Paton is a singer of the first rank, and will play Reiza divinely. Braham not less so, though in a totally different style. There are also several good tenors, and I really cannot see why the English singing should be so much abused. The singers have a perfectly good Italian

education, fine voices, and expression. The orchestra is not remarkable, but still very good, and the choruses particularly so. In short, I feel quite at ease as to the fate of *Oberon*."

The final production of the drama, however, was attended with more difficulty than he had anticipated. He had the usual prejudices to overcome, particular singers to conciliate, alterations to make, and repeated rehearsals to superintend, before he could inspire the performers with the proper spirit of the piece.

"Braham," says he, in another of his confidential letters to his wife, (29th of March, 1826), "begs for a grand scena instead of his first air, which, in fact, was not written for him, and is rather high. The thought of it was at first quite horrible; I could not hear of it. At last I promised, when the opera was completed, if I had time enough it should be done; and now this grand scena, a confounded battle piece and what not, is lying before me, and I am about to set to work, yet with the greatest reluctance. What can I do? Braham knows his public, and is idolized by them. But for Germany I shall keep the opera as it is. I hate the air I am going to compose (to-day I hope) by anticipation. Adieu, and now for the battle. So, the battle is over, that is half the scene. To-morrow shall the Turks roar, the French shout for joy, and the warriors cry out victory!"

THEATRICAL JOURNAL.

KING'S THEATRE.

THE Italian Opera has seldom opened under more flattering promises of entertainment and success than on the present occasion. Much as the enterprising manager has already effected, if we are to decide by the contents of his bills, he seems this year determined to outdo his former self. A stronger and more attractive company has not, within our recollection, been announced for the service of this theatre. Of sopranos we have Miss Fanny Ayton, Mesdames Rubini, Meric Lalande, and Pasta; of tenors, Signori Curioni, David, and Rubini; of basses, Signori De Begnis, Santini, and Lablache, besides various auxiliaries of different merit. The corps de ballet musters nearly equal strength and talent. Performances began the 5th ult., and since then we have had two operas. *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, and *Ricciardo e Zoraide*, both by Rossini, and the old ballet of *La Sonnambule*. In *Il Barbiere*, Madame Sigl Vesperman was Rosina, Curioni the Count, La Blache, Figaro, and De Begnis, Dr. Bartolo. Madame Sigl Vesperman is a German, of agreeable face and person, with a voice of very extensive compass but thin quality, farther depreciated by much of that shrillness and tremulousness to which we had last year occasion to object in Madame Meric Lalande. Monsieur Vesperman's first wife was a prima donna of singular excellence and reputation, a fact which has led to some disappointment on the part of those who, ignorant of her sudden demise some time back, supposed Madame Sigl to be the lady whose name had been so often highly commended by the continental critics. To us, neither her style of singing, her voice, nor execution are the most acceptable; to which peculiarity, if we add that her recitative is singularly feeble and expressive, we shall have stated enough to induce the reader to regret with us, that Signora Blasis has a

substitute at the King's Theatre. Curioni we have never heard in better voice, and Doctor Bartolo we have never seen in better hands than those of De Begnis, whose return to these boards was heartily welcomed by the audience. Lablache, a man of genuine humour, surprised us by the agility which he infused into the part of Figaro; it is unnecessary to add, that he sung admirably. His "Largo al Factotum" has been nightly encored.

Madame Vesperman's indisposition on the second night of performance, led to the introduction of Miss Fanny Ayton, who has also appeared twice as Zoraide. She has improved since we last heard her; but we regret to add of this very interesting, and, we believe, most excellent young lady, that she is hardly equal to the rank of prima donna at such a house as the King's Theatre. The tone of her voice is sweet, and she executes many passages with happy fluency; her acting is lively and gentle, but in strong concerted pieces she is lost, and worse than all, every now and then, gives out a note full one half flatter than the pitch required.

Ricciardo e Zoraide has attracted very full houses and excited great interest, for the celebrated David has appeared as its hero. Than this singer, for some years back, not an individual that we are aware of has enjoyed a higher name: and certainly he is a most extraordinary being. Tall and thin, when first you see and hear him, you pronounce him at once the prototype of all the caricatures you have ever met with of the Italian school. His gesticulation and the contortions of his face are extravagant in the extreme, and his embellishments flourishingly meretricious beyond precedent. Nor is his voice itself less singular. It is a tenor of soprano range, if the phrase be permissible, exquisitely sweet in the falsetto, and of surprising flexibility. Execution, such as he has treated us with, we never before heard from man. And yet with all this you at times are puzzled whether to laugh at him or applaud; he is so oddly impassioned, so egregiously florid, so exquisitely absurd, so tenderly outré. His finale, "Cessi omai del tuo rigore," should be heard by every singer and all lovers of music. Success cannot exceed the favour he is hailed with, which requires him nightly to step forth and make his acknowledgment at the fall of the curtain. The unanimity and force of this applause, set forth in contrast with the comparative indifference of the audience at the beginning, affords the highest test of his deserts. When first he presents himself, it is clear that the question of his superiority is undecided; people perceptibly have heard much for and against him, and his cause is *adhuc sub judice*; but as he proceeds, he dispels cold prejudice and hot opposition, and triumphs at the close in unmixed and highly vociferous popularity. But while paying tribute to the new favourite, let us not forget the claims of older acquaintance. Curioni, as Agorante, in this opera, gave us great satisfaction. His voice, far from suffering by competition with David, seems improved by it, and he throws an animation into his part which makes it about the best of many good ones, for which we owe him thanks. Zomira was personated by Mademoiselle Beck, a young lady of no great personal charms, and limited experience, as we suspect, in acting. Her voice is a mezzo soprano, of good quality, and her execution of the music, though not brilliant, was still just and decidedly respectable.

We have yet a word or two to devote to the corps de ballet, which, as we before mentioned, is this season very strong. In addition to Mademoiselle Brocard, who dresses and looks more charmingly than ever, we have Madame Montessu, the original Somnambule, a petite figure, and not handsome, but one of infinite agility and precision of step. There is also Mademoiselle Proche, a graceful dancer, with a good person, and two or three others, whom we shall further notice at a future opportunity. Among the men, Paul and Lefevre are the distinguished, the former being the most finished dancer of the day.—He does all you have ever seen done, without force, straining, or the least demonstration of violent exertion. The graceful ease with which he terminates every movement is greatly to be admired.

DRURY LANE.

Jan. 27.—The Brigand.—The Illustrious Stranger.—Davy Jones.

28.—Werner.—The Lady and the Devil.—Davy Jones.

29.—William Tell.—Davy Jones.

31.—King Richard the Third.*—Davy Jones.

Feb. 1.—The Devil's Brother.†—Davy Jones.—Masaniello.

2.—The Merchant of Venice.‡—Deaf as a Post.—Davy Jones.

* Kean re-appeared to-night, much to the surprise of many, in his old part of Richard Duke of Gloucester, and we shall frankly add, it had been altogether far better had he not now presented himself before the public at all. There are two reasons why he should not have appeared. The first, that he is evidently feeble in health—so feeble, indeed, that it was ridiculous to notice the delicacy with which Richmond was fain to fight him, and, after a pass or two, catch him in his arms, lest a fall on the stage might hurt his cracking bones: had Lord Ogleby been Richmond's opponent, the combat could not have been of a more valetudinarian character. A second reason for Kean's absence from the boards is, that no one can have forgotten his final benefit and leave-taking at the King's Theatre, in the dog-days last past; after which it was worse than botheration, as the Irishman said, to come on again at the earliest opportunity, just as if nothing at all had happened. Kean's admirers may point to the pit, and, triumphing in the hearty cheers with which the audience welcomed their favourite, cry out, "Here are our judges; beyond their voice we defy censure:" but however valid it may be for a public man to float on the public current, still the applause of the hour, given for the pleasure of the hour, leaves the character unhonoured by approbation; and the critic in the pit, who loves good acting, may not refuse to enjoy it, or enjoying to approve it, while he thinks but indifferently, if not ill, of the actor, who, under certain circumstances, should challenge his notice. There seems a want of rectitude and principle in Mr. Kean's conduct throughout this matter, which, coupled with other somewhat similar passages in his career, can add no lustre to his fame, and no credit to the profession of which he is, on the stage, so great an ornament. Beyond this there was nothing particular to remark of his performance; it was minute and painstaking, but wanted vigour, especially of voice—that organ appears to be rapidly failing him. The audience were enthusiastic in their plaudits, and, when the curtain fell, loudly demanded him: he came forward, and acknowledged the compliment in tones so low, and amidst so much confusion in the pit and galleries, that we could not catch his words.

† The opera of *The Devil's Brother* is avowedly taken, music and play, from Auber's *Fra Diavolo*—a great name—but *quandoque bonus dormitat Homerus*; and *The Devil's Brother* is far, very far inferior to *Masaniello*, and even to the *National Guard*. By the way, the production of this piece at Drury Lane must be a decided triumph for the minor theatres, for it was first *made English* at the Tottenham-street, and done again at the Olympic Theatre, before it was got up by Mr. Lee, at his patent house. Touching this point, we are inclined to think Mr. Lee might have achieved a better labour, by treating us with Auber's last opera, *Le Dieu et la Bayadère*, if indeed nothing short of Auber could have sufficed for his purposes; and again, by not adding, as he has done, to the compositions of such a master, especially when the bills announced that the music of the opera was Auber's, which, in point of fact, is not the truth. The piece is of the same school, though by no means so good as the *Brigand*; and on that account we may spare the reader a detail of its plot, which if less intricate, had been more satisfactory. It is strongly cast however, having Wallack, who (as *Fra Diavolo* and the *Marquis San Marco*) acts the bully and fop; Harley and Mrs. Orger, as Sir Gregory and Lady Goslington, a "precious pair" of English travellers; Webster as Luero, an innkeeper; Latham and Bedford, as two marauders, the one jocular, named Beppo, the other morose, dubbed Giacomo; and two lovers, Lorenzo, Sinclair, and Zulina, Mrs. Waylett. The performers did well, but no high opinion has been entertained of the piece, which, save Auber's music, has no recommendation to popular favour, and must soon be cut down to an afterpiece.

‡ Kean's Shylock was to-night received with full as much distinction as his Gloucester the other night. The present part for him had advantages which the

Feb. 3.—The Brigand.—The Illustrious Stranger.—Davy Jones.
 4.—The Jenkinses.—Devil's Brother.—Turning the Tables.—Davy Jones.
 5.—The Iron Chest.—Davy Jones.
 7.—King Richard the Third.—Davy Jones.
 8.—William Tell.—The Devil's Brother.
 9.—Werner.—No Song no Supper.—Davy Jones.
 10.—The Brigand.—The Illustrious Stranger.—Davy Jones.
 11.—A New Way to Pay Old Debts.—The Devil's Brother.
 12.—Rob Roy.*—Turning the Tables.—Davy Jones.
 14.—King Richard the Third.—Davy Jones.
 15.—William Tell.—The Devil's Brother.
 17.—The Brigand.—The Illustrious Stranger.—Davy Jones.
 18.—Oratorio.†
 19.—Othello.‡—Charles the Twelfth.
 21.—Richard the Third.—Davy Jones.
 22.—School for Scandal.§—Davy Jones. (By Command of their Majesties.)
 23.—No Performance.
 24.—The Brigand.—The Illustrious Stranger.—Davy Jones.

COVENT GARDEN.

Jan. 27.—The Chancery Suit.—Teddy the Tiler.—Harlequin Fat.
 28.—Cinderella.—Harlequin Fat.

other admitted not of—it required less physical exertion, and by so much was, to us, a more acceptable performance. Yet are we constrained to observe, that even in Shylock Kean exhibited painful marks of a ruined constitution, which, in no mean degree, destroyed the illusion of the scene. Further criticism on a performance long so well known were superfluous, and we can only regret the obligation we have been under to notice so much of it as we have done.

* Were we capable of the foul crime of conspiring to seduce people to abandon all relish and regard for the legitimate drama, and prevail on them to transfer their affections to the less dignified and not more natural concoctions of the modern stage, we do not know that we could fix on a happier piece for our purpose than *Rob Roy*, with Macready for its hero. That is an impersonation matchless in merit, so fresh, so gallant, so untheatrical—characteristics now seldom found in any performance, and most desirable is Liston's Baillie.

† The house was very well attended, and the performances, selected and conducted by Messrs. Bishop and Lee, were of the first merit. Braham and Miss Paton resumed their stations, and were warmly welcomed. Both were in excellent voice.

‡ We were disappointed with *Othello*; it was very feebly cast. Wallack was Iago; Miss Phillips, Desdemona; and Miss Huddart, Alicia. Kean, of course, was himself in Othello. The papers latterly stated that Macready would play Iago to his Othello; this were a treat to the public, for which we shall anxiously look, as it must redound greatly to the fame of him who shall make the sacrifice to impart it.

§ Their Majesties attended in state this evening, for the second time this season, and were greeted with every demonstration of attachment by a very full and most fashionable audience. *The School for Scandal*, cast in its present admirable style, has already had our warm approbation, and we cannot pass the opportunity of expressing our satisfaction that the court should have made choice, for their evening's entertainment, of decidedly the best performance, as a whole, which the management has produced. The fact reflects an encouraging credit on all to whom it extends. The two anthems, "God save the King," and "Rule Britannia," were sung as usual, or rather much better than we last heard them; and their Majesties, after evidently enjoying both the comedy and the pantomime—even the pantomime—in a high degree, returned to the palace somewhat after twelve.

Jan. 29.—Carnival at Naples.—The Irishman in London.—Harlequin Fat.
 31.—Fazio.—The Omnibus.—Harlequin Fat.

Feb. 1.—Cinderella.—Harlequin Fat.
 2.—Fazio.*—Married Lovers.†—Harlequin Fat.
 3.—The Romance of a Day.‡—Married Lovers.—Harlequin Fat.
 4.—Cinderella.—Harlequin Fat.
 5.—The Romance of a Day.—Married Lovers.—Harlequin Fat.
 7.—Fazio.—Married Lovers.—Harlequin Fat.

* Mrs. Chatterley having refused to perform the part of Aldabella, in *Fazio*, Miss Taylor undertook the part at a very short notice. An apology was made for this substitution of ladies, by Mr. Bartley, previously to the commencement of the second act. The lady has, it is said, been put on the forfeit list for thirty pounds.

† *Dram. Per.*—Duc d'Orleans, Mr. Abbott. Marquis de Meneville, Mr. Bartley. Sir John Ascot, Mr. Warde. Col. O'Dillon, Mr. Power. Pierre, Mr. Irwin. Francis, Mr. Mears. Marchioness de Meneville, Miss Taylor. Duchess d'Orleans, Miss Forde. Annette, Miss Phillips. Lady Ascott, Mrs. Chatterley.

The scene of Mr. Power's pleasant trifle is laid in Paris. The Duc d'Orleans, the Marquis de Meneville, and Sir John Ascot (an Englishman attached to the embassy, though apparently the greatest friends, are secretly endeavouring to seduce each other's wives. Hence a variety of intrigues, assignations, and counter-intrigues occur, all rendered more complex by the blunders of Colonel O'Dillon, a sort of pander to the Duc d'Orleans. The ladies, however, are aware of their husbands' profligacy, and by acting in concert together, contrive to make them perfectly ashamed of their intentions. They are separately appointed to meet their loves at a certain hotel. Here they are shewn into a dark room, where, after having remained some time, till they are almost frozen with cold, a party of ladies (among whom are their wives) enter with lights, and read them a wholesome moral lesson.

This piece reminded us of the least talented of the comedies in the reign of Charles the Second. We have met with these two principal incidents in some plays, the names of which we forget:—

Colonel O'Dillon is appointed to keep the coast clear, while his master visits Lady Ascot. The Colonel is, however, of a highly amorous disposition, and seeing a petticoat, is desirous of getting off duty to pay his respects to it, when he engages Sir John Ascot himself to become out-post, the Colonel only recognizing in the Baronet an old friend named Selby, and being entirely ignorant of his new name and elevation. The other incident is that of the Duc d'Orleans dressing himself as an old woman to meet Lady Ascot, and the Marquis, who knows the plan, habiting himself in matronly attire, and anticipating his grace.

The acting was throughout excellent. Miss Taylor, by her lady-like and spirited acting, as the Marchioness, has made another step towards attaining that station in public opinion which must one day be her lot. By the by, she looked most captivating in the Page's dress.

‡ *Dram. Per.*—Adolph, Count of Engleberg, Mr. Wilson. General Kienwitz, Mr. Bartley. Colonel Franceur, Mr. Abbott. Nikel Unterhand (Seneschal of the Castle), Mr. G. Penson. Moritz, Mr. Blanchard. Fritz Klaffen, Mr. Keeley. Paul Richter, Miss Taylor. Sophia Walstein, Miss Forde. Liese, Miss E. Tree. Widow Klaffen (Hostess of the Golden Lamb), Mrs. Gibbs. Karoline Klaffen, Miss H. Cawse. Therese, Miss P. Horton.

The scene is laid in the neighbourhood of Count Adolph's castle. Adolph is so disgusted with the profligacy of the females in his own rank of life, that he has formed the romantic determination of choosing a wife out of his own tenantry. Six of the most amiable and pretty girls are appointed to be at the castle, for the purpose of Adolph making an election. General Kienwitz, the Count's uncle, hearing of this strange whim, borrows the dress of a peasant, and with his niece, also disguised as one, appears at the castle, and joins the villagers. The Count is at once struck with the beauty of his cousin, and the old General is delighted at the thought of having his favourite wish realized (the union of the two cousins), when, by some accident, the plot is completely destroyed, and himself obliged to

Feb. 8.—Cinderella.—Harlequin Fat.
 9.—Fazio.—Married Lovers.—Harlequin Fat.
 10.—The Romance of a Day.—Married Lovers.—Harlequin Fat.*
 11.—Cinderella.—Comrades and Friends.*
 12.—The Romance of a Day.—Comrades and Friends.—Married Lovers.
 14.—Fazio.—Married Lovers.—Comrades and Friends.
 15.—Cinderella.—Married Lovers.
 16.—No Performance.
 17.—Much ado about Nothing.†—The Romance of a Day.

retreat from the castle. He shortly afterwards appears in his real character; but the Count, having discovered the plot, resolves to torment them a little before he falls into his wishes. There is a second plot, founded on the secret passion which Liese, a peasant girl, entertains for Colonel Franceur; and some ridiculous situations are caused by the folly of Fritz, who imagines that Liese is desperately in love with him.

The music of this opera is by Bishop, whose compositions, of late years, have certainly not added to his reputation; and the present production is, we regret to state, inferior to any of the least-talented of its predecessors; for, with the exception of a truly delightful ballad sung by Miss Taylor, and a patriotic glee, there is nothing in it worthy of notice. In fact, on the eighth night, nearly the whole of the music was omitted.

The dialogue is furnished by Mr. Planché. It is in his usual namby-pamby style. The songs in operas generally are very sad stuff; but the song about the Marriage of the Rose to the Nightingale is almost too bad—yes, even too bad—for Mr. Planché.

Of the performers we must first notice Miss Tree, whose acting in Liese is the most extraordinary display of genius we have seen for some time; for if any person could be persuaded to read the *Romance of a Day* we are confident that he would think the character dull and absurd, yet Miss Tree contrives to awaken the deepest sympathy, and to rivet the attention of the audience whenever she appears. Her pensive features, her rich, but subdued tones, her every gesture tells the history of one who is cherishing a passion which she knows is utterly hopeless, but yet cannot forbear indulging in it. Her delight on meeting the Colonel, after a lapse of four years, appeared so heartfelt, and yet was so delicately expressed that none but a poet's pen can do justice to it; therefore we will throw ours down. How beautifully she would pourtray the silent devouring passion of Viola! Miss Taylor had but little more than to exhibit her elegantly formed legs; the character was every way utterly unworthy of her abilities. We are glad, however, to observe, that some of the newspaper critics, who have been so unjust in their remarks upon her acting, begin to alter them, and declare she is a girl of some talent. Mr. Wilson was very hoarse; Hunt has since taken the character. Mrs. Gibbs, as the hostess of a tavern, scolded with great truth.

* A drama concocted by Mr. Pococke from *Damon and Pythias*, *The Point of Honour*, *The Two Serjeants*, &c. &c. We shall spare our readers a detail of the plot.

† Miss Kemble personated Beatrice for the first time. Her conception of the character was very creditable to her talents, but she does not possess sufficient *ris comica* to render that conception effective; her drawing delivery is not calculated to give effect to Beatrice's incessant sallies of wit and humour, yet in her first interview with Benedick she entered a good deal into the spirit of the character. There was something particularly impudent and provoking in her manner, when commencing the war of words with Benedick, "I wonder that you will still be talking, Signor Benedick, nobody minds you." As a whole, we think it infinitely superior to her Lady Townly, but, in no one instance, did come up to Miss Taylor, in the third act of *As You Like It*. Charles Kemble's Benedick can never be too highly praised; it abounds with whim, vivacity, and humour. The solemn buffoonery and blundering importance of Dogberry and Verges, were most adequately sustained by Blanchard and Keeley. All the characters, strange to say, were powerfully cast this evening. Warde, Leonato; Bennet, Pedro; Abbot, Claudio; and Miss Taylor Hero. The latter was made extremely interesting.

Feb. 18.—No Performance.

- 19.—Much ado about Nothing.—Married Lovers.—Omnibus.
- 21.—Fazio.—Comrades and Friends.
- 22.—Cinderella.—Married Lovers.
- 23.—The Sacred Oratorio of the Messiah.
- 24.—Much ado about Nothing.—The Romance of a Day.

HAYMARKET THEATRE.

THE FRENCH PLAYS.

THERE is no playhouse in London to which, of late years, we have resorted with more pleasure than to the little theatre in the Haymarket, when the French company has been playing there. For, in the pieces played, and the persons playing them, we have always had the internal assurance of seeing something very different from what we are indulged with on our own boards : the vaudevilles and petites comedies of France are faithful counterparts of French life and character—for what production of the English drama can this be said?—and among the corps dramatique there is, collectively and individually, an animation, agility, confidence, and humour that impart to them, one and all, a certain quality and fitness for their vocation, alike valuable and entertaining. You never see one of them sheepish or awkward. They can all sing, dance, and fence, and have a certain presentable address that tells effectively in almost every part.

With these predilections, we felt some disappointment when the company opened their season last month, to find several names in the bills which, printed in large type, led us to expect something superior, and yet which proved, upon trial, to be nothing better than our old acquaintances, the bulk of the company. Indeed, of the new men, not one is at all comparable to Laporte, who modestly sets himself down in small capitals : and of the ladies, our former friend, Mademoiselle St. Ange, is still decidedly the most meritorious. Of these accessories, however, if it be necessary to select an individual or two more distinguished than the rest, we should say that Monsieur Derval and Mademoiselle Herminie deserve the compliment—the former for his Jean, in the piece of that name; and the latter for her Yelva, in *L'Orpheline Russe*.

Early in the month, however, came Monsieur Bouffé, and at once the interest of these performances increased tenfold. Bouffé is extremely popular at Paris, and is a man of great natural talent; yet, so different is he in different characters, it is not easy to describe him. His great distinction is that of always completely identifying himself with his part. He is never the same. In the expression of quick, lively, and earnest feelings he is particularly happy. But a short notice of the incidents of one or two things in which we have seen him, will best exemplify his powers. He came out as Jean Gaillard, in *Le Portefeuille*. Jean Gaillard, like all Frenchmen, has been a soldier, and is a cabriolet driver—honest, simple-hearted, affectionate, and proud of his profession. He is on the eve of marriage, and friends are about to meet to celebrate the union, when two accidents occur ; first, Jean finds a pocket-book, and then saves a young lady from drowning, who had thrown herself into the Seine. He brings her to his betrothed, and finds that terror of marriage with Mons. Durmer, to whom her hand was that night to have been given, drove her from her home in despair. Now, Durmer turns out to be her intended, the owner of the pocket-book, and an old superior officer of Jean Gaillard's—a dissipated, worthless fellow, as Jean knew of old, and can now prove by the contents of his pocket-book. So, telling the young lady all shall yet be well with her, he sets off, dressed in his best, to her house, where the wedding-feast is being celebrated with music and dancing. Here he speaks his mind like a man, warns, wheedles, coaxes, threatens, moves the girl's father or uncle, we forget which, by a recital of what has occurred, frightens the intended with the fear of exposure, and after bargaining that he shall give up the bride to get back his

pocket-book, sees her hand bestowed on the man she loves, and returns contented to his own humble bridal. Bouffé dashed through this part with great truth and liveliness.

Then there was his Rigaudin le Bossu, in *La Maison en Loterie*, another admirable impersonation of quite another class. Rigaudin is a little notary's clerk, deformed, hunch-backed, with a squeaking voice, and all that prying curiosity, arch meddling, and restless busy-bodiness, to coin a word, which sometimes so strongly mark persons of his injured state. The plot of the piece turns upon the incidents attending the disposal, by lottery, of a house and garden in a country village, where the intensity with which Rigaudin looks after every one's affairs and interests—now from the top, and now from the bottom of the house—is highly entertaining. The wit of the piece hinges upon the fortune of the lucky ticket, which has passed through several hands, been sold and resold, much to the discomfiture of the parties, and highly to the amusement of Le Bossu, whose chuckling exultation, as it turns out that this one has thrown away his chance, and that one has thrown it away, is of the wildest and liveliest description. We would add something in favour of his Quoniam, which is a capital picture of knowing jealousy; and of his Pierre, in *Le Couvreur*, which is the original of our *Teddy the Tiler*; but want of room compels us to postpone further remark this month.

MINOR THEATRES.

QUEEN'S THEATRE, (late Tottenham Street.)—Mr. M'Farren, the author of a strange nondescript production, called *George the Third, the Father of his People*, has taken this Theatre on a lease of 21 years, at a yearly rental of 1000*l.* and we sincerely trust, from the liberal spirit he has evinced, that the Queen's name will prove a tower of strength, and that the alteration of the title may be productive of a change in the fortunes of the theatre; for it has proved but a bad speculation to nearly all who have been concerned in it, from Mr. Paul, the first manager, who lost 20,000*l.*, down to Messrs. Melrose and Chapman, who lost nothing, for that best of all possible reasons, they had nothing to lose. Mr. Beverley made it answer by bringing the nightly expenses down to about 10*l.* and by a happy knack he possessed of making benefits, and he generally had about six in a season.

Mr. M'Farren has really made strenuous exertions to obtain patronage; he has provided a talented company, an excellent orchestra, a stage manager attentive to his duties, (for we never saw the minutiae of the scene so strictly attended to.) The interior of the theatre has also undergone great alterations; the passages are made wider, the proscenium higher, and the boxes most tastefully and elegantly decorated; we must, however, except the plaster of Paris heads of the muses, which are by no means in character with the other arrangements.

The performances were *The Merry Wives of Barbican*.—*Three to One*.—*Galatea*.—*Tact*.

The Merry Wives, a broad burletta, in one act. The plot turns upon the wives of several tradesmen plotting against a Mr. Ogle, a deformed but mighty amorous turner, who has boasted of favours which he never received. We cannot speak in praise of this production. The dialogue was far too coarse. Russell was the hero, and played cleverly, but he is not the best of low comedians, though an admirable actor in his line. Mrs. Humby sung a parody on "The deep deep sea," very pleasingly. In the second piece, Mrs. Glover enacted the widow of an admiral, constantly using nautical phrases. The character is poorly copied from Mrs. General, in *Spring and Autumn*.

Galatea, in which the whole of Handel's delightful music is introduced, quite surprised us, from the admirable manner in which it is got up. The principal characters were, Acis, Mr. Bennet, (from the Academy of Music.) Ulysses, Mr. Spence, (from Norwich.) Nestor, Mr. Seguin. Damon, Mr. J. Russel. Polyphemus, Mr. E. Seguin. Galatea, Miss Vernon, (pupil of Velluti.) The piece itself is an odd composition; the author has endeavoured to mix his bon-

bast and nonsense with the sweet poetry of Gay. We were much astonished at the erroneous idea we have formed of those worthies, Nestor and Ulysses, Nestor did not utter one wise sentence, while Ulysses made some detestable puns. Bennet is evidently a highly scientific singer, possessing great taste, and a pleasing but powerless voice. As an actor, he has every thing to learn. Miss Vernon has a most interesting and expressive countenance, but her voice wants fulness and melody. She appeared, however, to be labouring under severe indisposition. Mr. Seguin is one of the most promising performers we have seen for some time. His voice is a rich and powerful bass, his figure is remarkably tall, and his attitudes and gestures, for so young an actor, perfectly astonishing. He has every chance of holding a high rank in his profession. Russel sang a bacchanalian song successfully, and Mrs. Humby made the most of the little assigned to her.

In the last piece, a laughable farce, we saw Mr. Green, (late of Covent Garden,) enact a roguish footman very pleasantly. We think he has considerably improved since last we saw him; he has less mannerism and more vivacity. Mr. Forrester, as a captain over head and ears in debt and love, looked very gentlemanly, and played respectably. J. Russel was quite at home as a strolling player. A Mr. Smith played an avaricious old gentleman cleverly.

OLYMPIC.—This theatre continues to be nightly crowded. A Miss Sydney, a very pretty girl, and a passable singer, has been added to the company.

COBURG.—A very splendid melodrama has been produced, called *De L'Orme, or, the Priest of Saragossa*, adapted, by Mr. T. Dibdin, from the romance of that name. The scenery is excellent, and the acting very good of the kind. The principal characters are sustained by Serle, H. Kemble, Gomersal, Wild, H. Williams, Palmer, and Miss Watson.

SURREY.—A Miss Poole, from Norwich, has been starring here, in Mrs. Haller, Bianca, &c. We saw a portion of her Bianca, and, as Dr. —— says, "one pill is a dose," for we have not ventured upon another visit. Mr. Osbaliston continues to sacrifice his employers' interests to his vanity. The company wants recruiting; it never was much worse.

MISCELLANEOUS.

Miss MORDAUNT, who recently retired from the boards of Drury Lane, without giving the slightest notice of her intention so to do, has entered into an engagement for life with Alexander Nesbitt, Esq. of the Guards. The parties, being both *infants*, were united by bans. The ceremony was solemnized at Stepney church, and the happy couple started immediately for Suffolk to spend the honeymoon. The lady's sudden retirement has rendered her father liable to Mr. Morris, proprietor of the Haymarket Theatre, for the sum of 1000*l.* being the amount of the penalty in the event of her not completing her engagement to that gentleman; and 500*l.* to Mr. Alexander Lee, the proprietor of Drury Lane Theatre, under similar circumstances.

Dr. HUNTER's spacious anatomical theatre, in Windmill-street, is going to be converted by Ducrow into an Amphitheatre for winter equestrian, melo-dramatic, and pantomimic performances.

Mr. KEMBLE and his daughter have been playing at Brighton, during the past month, with great success.

YOUNG will appear soon after Easter, to take his farewell of the stage.

ANECDOTES OF THE FRENCH STAGE, BY E. W. T.

SCARRON'S BURLESQUE DEDICATION.

THE following ridiculous dedication to the King of France was prefixed, by that admirable wit, to his comedy of *Don Japhet D'Arménie* :—

“TO THE KING.

“SIRE,—Any other *Bel-esprit* but myself would have begun with telling your majesty that you are the greatest king upon earth: that you were more knowing in the art of reigning at fourteen years old than the oldest greybeard: that you are the best made among men much less among kings; and, in short, that you have nothing to do but to stretch out your arms and touch the top of Mount Lebanon, and as much farther as you please. All this is very handsome and virtually true; but I shall say nothing of it here. I shall only say, that since your power is so great, I entreat you to use it to do me a little good; for if you were to do me a little good, I should be much merrier; if I were much merrier, I should write merrier comedies; if I were to write merrier comedies, you would be more diverted; and if you were more diverted, your bounty would not be thrown away. All this seems so reasonable, that I am persuaded I should think the conclusion fair, even were I as great a king as your majesty, instead of a poor miserable devil as I really am, but nevertheless

“Your majesty's

“Very obedient, and very faithful subject and servant,

“SCARRON.”

EPITAPHS.

Immediately after Moliere's death, Paris was inundated with epitaphs. Among the rest, a poet presented one to the great Condé, who always had loved and admired Moliere. Having read a line or two of it, “Take it away,” said he, “you write Moliere's epitaph! I wish to God he was alive to write yours.”

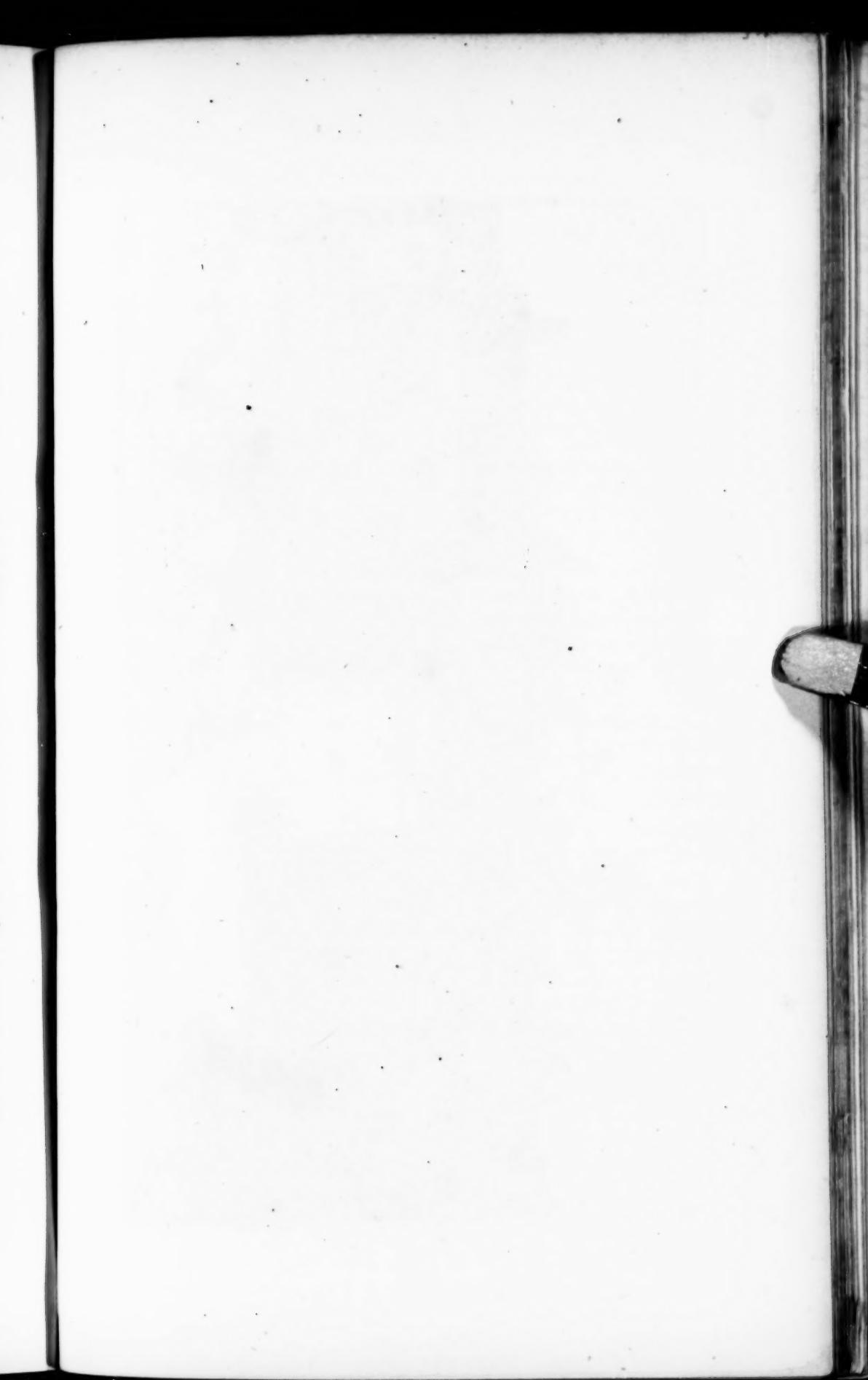
(To be continued.)

PROVINCIAL INTELLIGENCE.

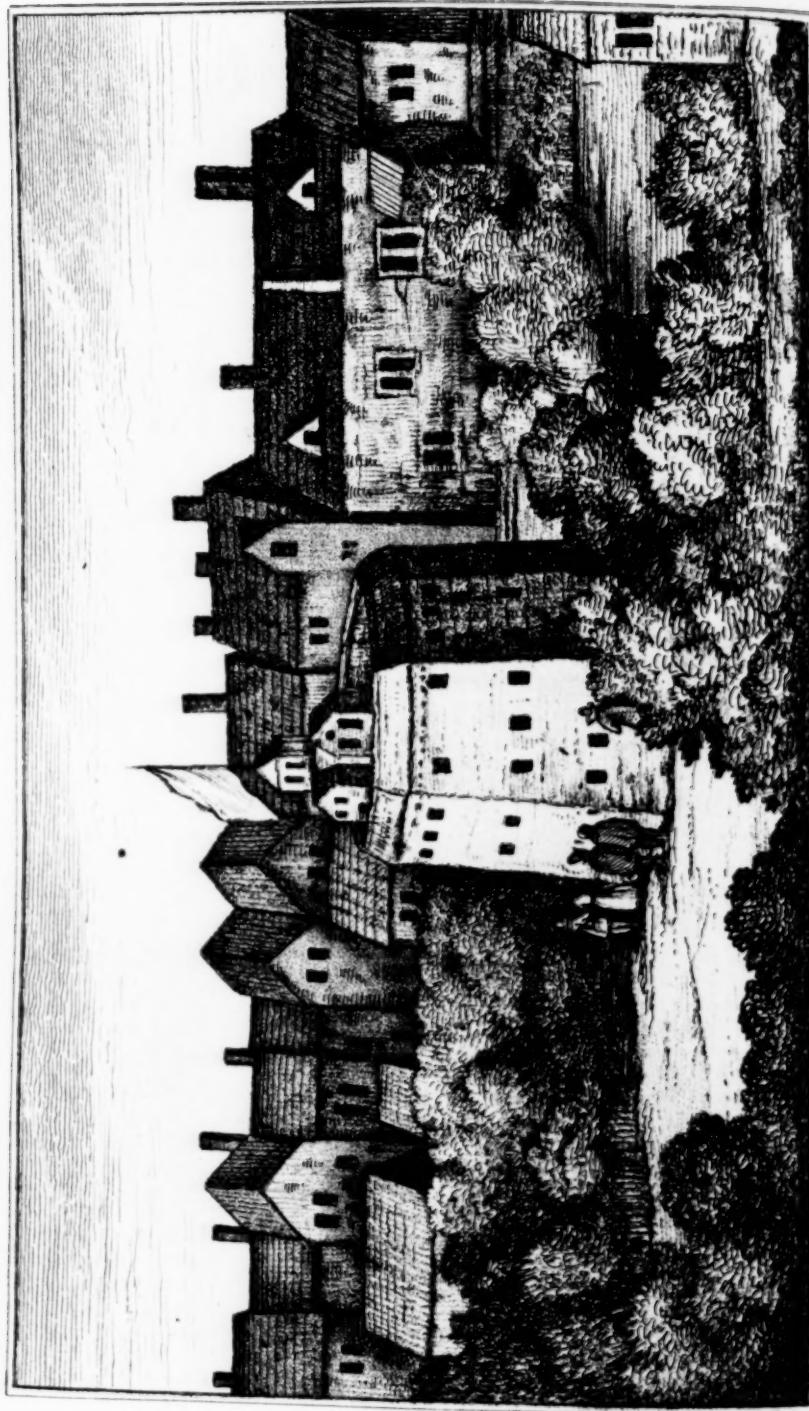
DUBLIN.—THEATRE ROYAL.—On Wednesday, February 9, the Lord Lieutenant visited the theatre in state. On entering the state box he was received with loud cheering, mingled with some hisses. The performances were *The Jealous Wife*, and *The Miller and his Men*. Mr. Vandenhoff (who is our head tragedian) played Oakley. Mr. Barry made an excellent Captain O'Cutter: in Irish characters we like him better than any we have yet seen, not excepting even Power himself. In the afterpiece, Messrs. H. Cooke and Brough, and Mrs. H. Hughes, as Grindoff, Riber and Claudine, were very respectable. On Monday, the 14th, Mr. Young commenced an engagement of a few nights (being his farewell visit to Ireland) in *Hamlet*, to a full house. Mr. Calcraft played the Ghost, and Mrs. W. West the Queen. On the preceding Friday, Mademoiselles

Celeste and Constance took their farewell benefit. The entertainments were *Brother and Sister*—*Ballet*—*The Force of Nature* (first time)—*The Dog of Montargis*. The house was well attended. The new drama of *The Force of Nature* was very well received. Indeed, all the new pieces produced since the opening have been successful, with the exception of *The Sister of Charity* and *The Chancery Suit*. *Cinderella* has been got up here with great splendour. Sapiro played the Prince, Miss Betts, Cinderella, and Miss Coveney the Fairy Queen. It was received with great applause, and has had a long run. Mr. Calcraft is going on the plan of having an excellent stock company, and as few stars as possible. We hope he may succeed. Upon the whole, the theatre seems to be answering better with him than any of the former lessees.

L. S. W.



THE GLOBE THEATRE.





J.W. Gear Del.

J. Rogers Sc.

MR. COOPER.
AS
JOHN OF PARIS.

Engraved for the Dramatic Magazine.